

NINETY-FIVE YEARS BESIDE THE GOLDEN GATE



❧ The History of The First Baptist Church

of San Francisco, California

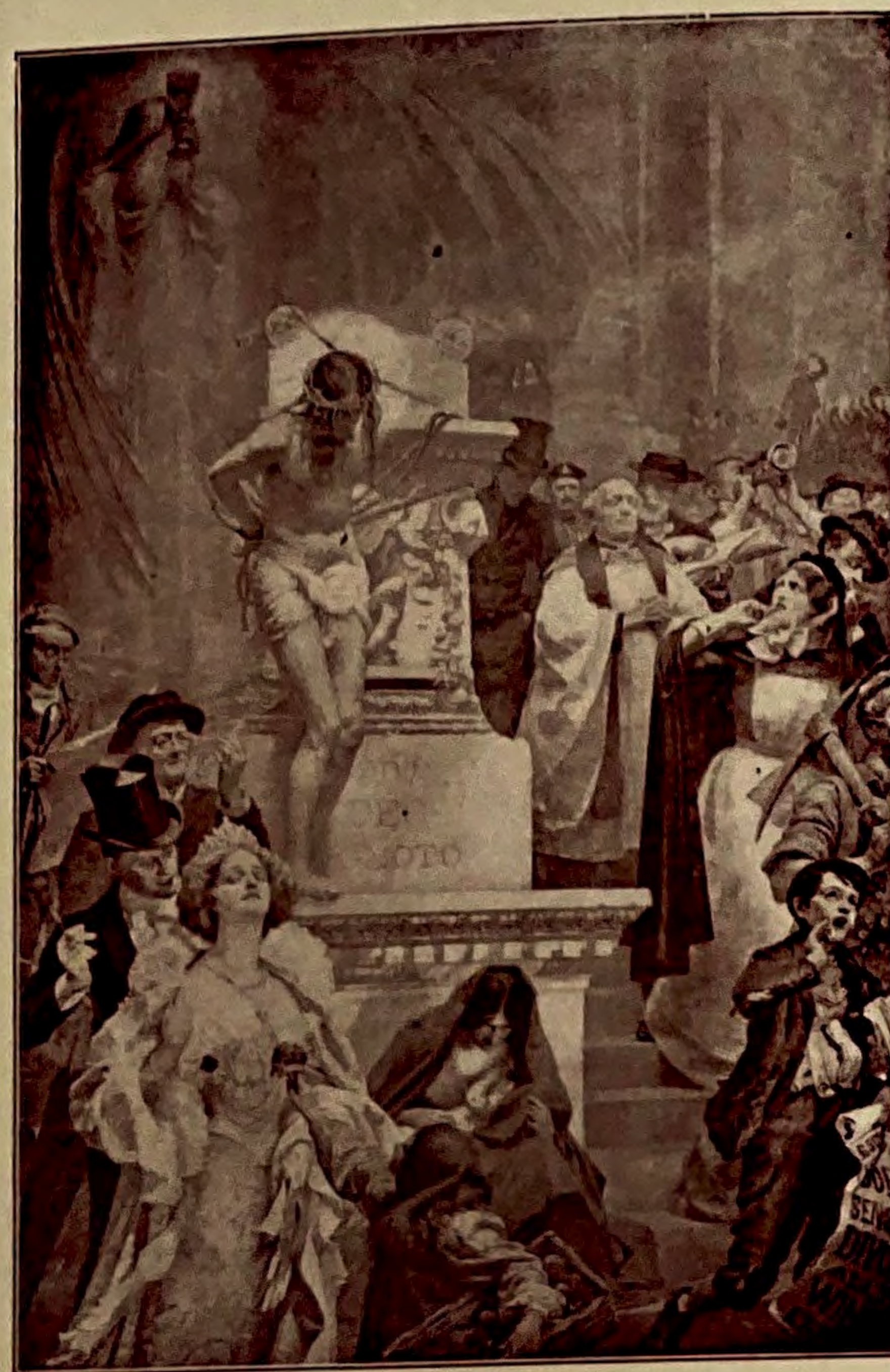
1849—1944

The History
of the
FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH

of
San Francisco, California

1849—1944

by
SANDFORD FLEMING Ph. D.



First Baptist Church of San Francisco,
1849

Ninety-five Years Beside The Golden Gate



Dr. Osgood C. Wheeler
The First Pastor

YE HAVE seen all that the Lord did." With these words the aged Moses, preparing to hand on the torch to younger hands, turned the eyes of Israel backward, reminding them of the directing providence of God in the affairs of the nation: "Ye have seen all that the Lord did. . . . Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations." (Deuteronomy 29:2, 10.) This is characteristic of the Bible. The ministry of memory is constantly emphasized. "Remember!" is an insistent admonition. The Scriptures affirm clearly, as a modern preacher has declared, that "all great tomorrows are reached by great insight into yesterday."

Nearly a century ago, on the eastern seaboard, men of God heard the Divine voice declaring with no uncertain sound:

*Go where the waves are breaking
On California's shore,
Christ's precious gospel taking,
More rich than golden ore.*

As a result of their labor, on the shores of the Pacific and beside the Golden Gate a church was born, the first Baptist church constituted in the Golden State. We do well to turn our eyes backward to see something of what the Lord has done in and through this church, to remember reverently the sacrifice and toil, the blood and tears of those who have wrought through these years inspired by love for the Lord of life. Such remembrance must stir our hearts and quicken our devotion. For those who possess spiritual awareness, such an anniversary becomes also an occasion of renewed dedication.



Dr. Lewis J. Julianet
Present Pastor



First Baptist Church of San Francisco, 1944



SAN FRANCISCO IN 1849

The Pioneer Decade

IMEDIATELY after the close of the Mexican War, the Board of the Home Mission Society conducted an inquiry into "the expediency of establishing a mission in California." After mature consideration the committee reported, affirming the conviction that such a mission should be established forthwith. The Society decided to enter upon the enterprise, the main object being, "to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of that land who had for ages been oppressed with the rule of Roman Catholic priests."

The man selected to begin the work was a young preacher in the first year of a pastorate in the First Baptist Church of Jersey City, New Jersey. One Monday morning this young pastor attended the regular ministers' meeting in New York City, and during the meeting he received word that Dr. B. M. Hill, the Corresponding Secretary of the Home Mission Society, wanted to see him. He went to his office, and without any preliminary remark, Dr. Hill said: "We want you to go to California as our pioneer missionary." When he had caught his breath, Rev. Osgood C. Wheeler began to marshal the reasons which made such a course impossible, and wound up with an emphatic negative to the suggestion. However, that was not the end of the matter. The Board had a conviction that here was God's man, and the matter was presented to him repeatedly in various ways. One especially challenging appeal was made by the President of the Society, Dr. S. H. Cone of the First Baptist Church of New York City. After stressing earnestly the importance of the task and the seriousness of the invitation to undertake it, he said: "But do you know where you are going, my brother? I would rather go as a missionary to China or Cochin-China, than to San Francisco. Don't you stir a step, my brother, unless you are prepared to go to the darkest spot on earth." At the end of sixteen days, after a night spent in prayer, the decision was made during family worship. "A burden as distinct as that which rolled from the shoulders of Bunyan's Pilgrim, at the foot of the cross," says Wheeler, "was removed from my shoulders, and my wife and I arose



Dr. Spencer H. Cone
President of the American
Baptist Home Mission
Society in 1849





Dr. O. C. Wheeler
1849 — 1851

simultaneously, and without the interchange of a word, both broke out in

*To God I'm reconciled;
His pardoning voice I hear;
He owns me for His child,
I will no longer fear."*

The decision was made known immediately to the Secretary of the Society, who declared: "Thank God; I knew it would be so." And thus began the California Mission.

The decision of O. C. Wheeler was as definite and wholehearted as any ever made by monk or priest. He wound up all his affairs, never expecting to return. Through the difficult, toilsome, discouraging days ahead he never turned aside while health permitted. In spite of attractive offers and subtle temptations he remained loyal to the dedication which accompanied his answer to God's call. It is a striking evidence of the providential direction of God that this man, earnest, devoted, sacrificial, with a great heart and a keen mind, possessing unique gifts of eloquence and organization, was selected for the California Mission. One may wonder whether he would have succeeded in the California of the pre-gold days. But it is difficult to think of one better fitted for the boisterous days of the pioneering period.

Once the decision was made the rush of preparation began. In fourteen days, on Friday, December first, 1848, three days before the news of the discovery of gold reached Washington, Wheeler and his wife sailed out of New York harbor on the steamer "Falcon," together with missionaries of the American Home Mission Society, Rev. Samuel H. Willey and Rev. John W. Douglas. In those fourteen days he resigned his pastorate, closed up all his business affairs, visited Philadelphia, preached ten times, gave three addresses, and superintended the getting together of his outfit. One can imagine there were few idle moments in those two weeks of preparation.

The journey was a long and dangerous one. A brief account of it appears in the New York Chronicle early in 1849. Cholera broke out among the passengers. The journey across the Isthmus was full of peril. Three days and three nights were spent in a canoe on the Chagres River with the added hazard of storm. Twenty-five miles had to be traveled on horse-back over seemingly impassable streams and mountains. Then followed a tiresome wait of thirty-four days at Panama, and twenty-eight days on board the "California." Ninety days after they left New York the missionaries passed through the Golden Gate, and the first Baptist minister had reached San Francisco to establish the Baptist witness in the territory toward which the attention of the world was directed.

The honor of beginning Protestant missionary work in the State goes to the Methodists. The Rev. William Roberts in 1846 was appointed missionary superintendent for Oregon, and was instructed by his Board to survey California as a mission field enroute. He arrived in San Francisco in April 1847 and spent several weeks exploring the field. On April twenty-fifth he held a preaching service in the dining room of an old adobe hotel



building with a billiard room and a saloon on one side, and two card rooms on the other, all doing business. In spite of the surroundings the service evidently moved some present. An old sailor at the close put a five dollar gold piece in his hat and passed it around the room, collecting over fifty dollars. This he gave to the preacher, saying with tears in his eyes: "That was a damned good sermon."

O. C. Wheeler reached San Francisco on February 28, 1849. Immediately he came into contact with a splendid Baptist layman, a leading merchant of the city, Mr. C. L. Ross, who proved a warm friend and a loyal supporter. It was in a partially completed house of Mr. Ross that Wheeler held his first service. He writes of that occasion, under date of March 17, 1849: "Yesterday we commenced holding public worship in a small, unfinished building, without doors or windows, pulpit, or even a table. It was cold and windy, but with short notice we collected a congregation, to whom I was permitted to preach of the preciousness of Christ to those who believe. There was deep emotion among them, and I noticed tears stealing down the cheeks of my hearers."

Two months later, on May 27, regular services were commenced morning and evening, and a Sunday School was started. Several parents agreed to send their children to the Sunday School, but when the time came only one boy appeared for the two teachers, Mr. and Mrs. Wheeler. For four weeks the outlook was discouraging. On the fourth Sunday there were only six persons present at the preaching service. However, the missionary persevered, and four weeks later, "the three rooms in the house and the long veranda were filled with people at the preaching service and there were forty scholars in the Sunday School."

On June 8, a regular weekly prayer meeting was started, apparently not an easy venture. Wheeler tells of lighting up for the meeting and waiting alone with his wife for an hour before anyone came. Then four strangers appeared and they had the meeting.

Almost immediately plans were under way for the organization of a church. The first move was made on Sunday, June 17, when Wheeler, at the close of the morning service, "requested all Baptists then present to remain for the purpose of consulting upon the propriety of organizing a Baptist church." A committee was appointed to report a week later and the report recommended: "That a Baptist church be organized, with no unnecessary delay." The recommendation was adopted unanimously, and thirteen persons were listed as "consenting members," although it was stipulated that only those were to be recognized as members who should present letters from sister churches. On Friday, July 6, a little company assembled at the house of Charles L. Ross, when six people presented church letters, these being recognized as the constituent members of the church. It was a small beginning, but the brief records give a hint of the solemnity and significance of the occasion: "The Covenant of the church was then read, while all were standing. We then all knelt down and each one, successively and vocally engaged in prayer and dedicated him and herself to God and the church."



First Building, 1849





First Addition, 1850

After a brief address from the Pastor, accompanied by the hand of fellowship to each one, the church adjourned." The six members of the infant church, the first Baptist church of California, represented three states: "Osgood Church Wheeler and Elizabeth H. Wheeler from Jersey City; Charles L. Ross and Emily Ross from New York; Lemuel P. Crane from Galway, New York; and William Lailie from Columbia, South Carolina.

Two days later the church was publicly recognized, Wheeler preaching on the text in Luke 12:32: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." In the afternoon the first communion service was held. "There were only eleven present," the record states, "and the Lord manifested his spiritual presence in our midst."

Immediately the business of building a house of worship occupied the attention of the little company. On July 10 a beginning was made on a lot costing \$10,000.00 on the north side of Washington Street near Stockton, now in the heart of Chinatown. Wheeler cleared the lot, bored the first hole for the frame, and toiled constantly on the building until it was finished. On August 5, 1849, a simple building thirty by fifty feet, which had cost \$6,000.00 to erect, was dedicated, the first Protestant church building ever constructed in the Golden State.

In spite of the primitive structure and the discomfort inevitable under such conditions, that little house of God became a center of Christian influence and a blessing to many. The congregations were large comparatively. A letter from Wheeler dated June 20, 1849, which was published in *The Christian Watchman* and *Christian Reflector*, states: "You will be happy to know that my place of worship, (two large parlors,) is crowded with an auditory of the most interesting and intelligent persons which New England and New York has ever sent out." A letter written three months later and published in the *New York Recorder* in November, 1849, reports a congregation of three hundred, nearly all men. The previous Sunday about forty had been turned away. "I never saw better attention," he says, "nor half as much emotion." It was a shifting congregation however, with more than one hundred new faces each week. Most of those attending were young men.

The inadequacy of the building even in those days of meager equipment was soon recognized. In September 1850 the building was enlarged, an addition twenty-five by forty feet being placed across the rear. Apparently it was improved from time to time, as a correspondent writing in the *New York Baptist Register* in September 1852 states: "Our house of worship has just been enlarged, at a cost of over \$2,000, and is now one of the finest houses in the city, as to interior finish. It is more than crowded every Sabbath, and a California congregation no longer wants the presence of women to cheer and beautify. A California congregation excels, in intellectual appearance, even a New York one."

The first baptism performed by Wheeler was a most interesting event, and he has left a graphic account of it. At a meeting on October 19, 1849, the candidate was received. Wheeler wrote under that date: "This evening

we have received as a candidate for baptism a most interesting convert—an excellent gentleman from Virginia—whom I expect to baptize tomorrow. Truly God is good to our Israel, and in his name we will rejoice." The candidate was Colonel Thomas H. Kellam of the United States Army.

On Sunday morning, October 21st, a beautiful clear calm sunny morning, an immense crowd gathered at the humble little sanctuary. The other churches of the city had suspended their services and their pastors and congregations were present. An imposing procession was formed, "with due deference to the rank and standing of the guests," and marched down Stockton Street to Union, to Powell, to North Beach, where the shallow water and sandy beach made an excellent baptistry. In addition to the pastors and congregations of the other churches, the mayor and other city officials were in the procession, several state officers and federal officials, Commodore Jones, commanding the Pacific Squadron, and his naval staff, together with a large number of marines, all in full uniform, and the chiefs of the medical staff of the Pacific division of both the Army and Navy with their assistants. Also present were Dr. Judd, prime minister of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and (who was accompanied by) the heir apparent and his cousin. "We had also with us," writes Wheeler, "large numbers of visitors from nearly every civilized nation on earth, who had been drawn here by the gold excitement, and hundreds of the citizens of San Francisco."

It was a deeply impressive service. The Rev. S. H. Willey read the Scripture and the Rev. T. Dwight Hunt offered prayer, after which the candidate, "a noble specimen of man, 6 feet 2 inches tall and finely proportioned," walked with Wheeler about a hundred yards into the water, the whole company singing Judson's baptismal hymn:

*"Come, Holy Spirit, Dove Divine
On these baptismal waters shine,
And teach our hearts, in highest strain
To praise the Lamb for sinners slain."*

"As we reached the shore," Wheeler wrote, "Commodore Jones came forward and, giving me his warm, earnest hand, expressed his extreme delight and gratitude for the privilege of attending that most solemn and interesting service of our denomination. We then reformed and returned, in the most perfect order, to our sanctuary, where the assembly was dismissed."

Later Wheeler describes another similar scene, the candidate this time being "a lady of middle age." "The day was beautiful," he says, "and the bay of San Francisco appeared to welcome to its bosom, with charming loveliness, this first sister in Christ who ever, in its waters, was 'buried in baptism.'" We returned from the water-side as from a holy place; for there the Lord had smiled upon us."

Apparently the practice of open air baptism continued for a number of years. As late as 1857 the First Baptist Church of San Francisco reports baptism in the Bay, although they were now in a substantial and commodious building.

In addition to the demands of his own field in San Francisco, Wheeler



J. F. Pope
The first accession to the Church in 1849 and a tower of strength through several decades.





Dr. Benjamin Brierly
1852 — 1858

was seeking constantly to establish other churches. In May 1850 he organized the First Baptist Church of San Jose; in September he led in the organization of the First Baptist Church of Sacramento. That same month eight men, four ministers and four laymen, met in Wheeler's study to consider the organization of an association, and in October the San Francisco Baptist Association was duly organized in the First Baptist Church of San Francisco, just fifteen months after the first church was constituted. There were then three Baptist churches in the state, with a total membership of fifty-three.

The various interests of the Kingdom were not neglected by the church in those days of beginnings. In October 1849 a Bible Society was organized. Temperance was advocated vigorously. The missionary obligation of the church was stressed and offerings taken for this enterprise. The work of the Sunday School received earnest attention and support. The church under the guidance of Wheeler led in every worthy endeavor.

However, there were many discouragements. Wheeler wrote to the Home Mission Society in September, 1849: "I am trying to preach, to labor, to pray; and I love my work, but I have never seen a harder task than to get a man to look through a lump of gold into eternity."

In October, 1849, a Baptist Society was constituted to care for the business of the church. The Society agreed to undertake the support of the pastor and voted him a salary of \$10,000.00 per year. In view of the cost of living this was not extravagant, although it later proved an embarrassment and was reduced to \$5,000.00. A disastrous fire which occurred early in 1851 when Wheeler was in Southern California recuperating from illness "prostrated the business and destroyed the beauty" of the city. "All accounts," Wheeler wrote, "would fail to make any sort of correct impression of the terrible devastation. Nearly all the business part of the town was burned. The loss cannot be less than twenty millions." The Baptist Church and Society were greatly affected. Wheeler declared in a letter on May 31st: "My Church and Society have suffered very much more than any other. I have no means of very accurate calculation, but from what I do know, I think it is safe to say that the loss of property in the hands of the members of my congregation exceeds half a million. Men of good judgment and intelligence express the opinion that no Christian church and congregation ever before sustained so great a loss by any one calamity, as ours has in the recent fire."

The minutes after this indicate increasing embarrassment due to the financial situation. This was probably the reason for the resignation of Wheeler on November 2, 1851, two years and eight months after his arrival in San Francisco. He had wrought well for the Baptist cause and for the whole work of the Kingdom. His earnestness and devotion, his remarkable mental and spiritual gifts, his whole-souled commitment to this God-given task made him outstanding. Soon after his resignation he assumed the pastorate at Sacramento, but after a few years because of a throat affliction, he found it necessary to relinquish the active ministry. He remained to the end a courageous, devoted leader in the denomination.

Following the resignation of Wheeler the church passed through a diffi-

cult and discouraging period. It was nearly a year before a new pastor was secured, and the anxiety of the church to secure a pastor is apparent in the records. On May 28, 1852, Rev. Benjamin Brierly arrived in San Francisco with his family, and the church reported: "We are happy to be able to say that arrangements have been made with him to serve us at present as a temporary supply—may his stay with us be attended with a large blessing from above."

The Rev. Benjamin Brierly was recognized in the denomination as a man of unusual ability and eloquence. Two years before coming to San Francisco he had addressed the annual meeting of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in New York City, and the address was published by vote of the Society. It was a strong missionary appeal, in which he refers to "the foundations of a vast empire upon the shores of the Pacific."

The church reported "a new era of prosperity" under the new pastor. The Annual Letter to the Association a few months after the beginning of the pastorate stated: "At last session we numbered thirty-two members, of whom only seventeen were residents; now we number seventy, of whom forty-eight are residents."

In 1855 the Annual Letter speaks of the deep interest in the prayer meetings, and states that several conversions and baptisms had occurred. The following year the report declares: "In all respects our prospects are more encouraging than at any previous period." In 1857, when the Association met with the church for the second time, a splendid account of the blessing attending the work of the church was given. When Brierly closed his work in May 1858 the membership numbered 131, 110 of whom were resident members.

One interesting incident during Brierly's pastorate was the ordination of Thomas Atwood in August 1856, the first man set apart by the church for the preaching of the gospel. A few years later in a period between ministers he supplied the church on a number of occasions.

One of the most significant developments of this second pastorate was the erection of a new building. The hopes and fears, the plans and dreams of the small group of believers can be discerned in the church records of 1853. In January of that year a building committee was elected composed of three of the strongest men in the church: C. L. Ross, J. F. Pope, and J. H. Coghill. Inquiries were set on foot to ascertain under what conditions a loan could be secured, and it was found that 2½% per month was the lowest interest obtainable. In June the building committee was instructed to commence building immediately, and on July 6, exactly four years after the church was constituted, it was resolved: "That the building committee have full power to do all and everything that in their judgment may be necessary to secure the early erection of a church edifice on the site of the present one." As a result the useful brick chapel, fifty-two feet by eighty-five feet, accommodating about 450 people, was completed, the design being that this should serve as the basement of the completed structure.

Immediately steps were taken to complete the building but there were various hindrances, until on April 20, 1857, a contract was entered into, and



Mrs. J. F. Pope





Dr. David B. Cheney
1859 — 1867

on September 27 the day long looked for arrived, and the doors of the new building were opened at two o'clock. "The exercises were long but interesting," the minutes state. The printed program gives the name as the Washington Street Baptist Church. It was a great day for this First Baptist Church of California. For more than eight years the church had carried on its work under great difficulty and discouragement, with a shabby and inadequate building. Now it had a house of worship "large, beautiful and convenient," where for approximately twenty years public worship was carried on and the gospel preached. This was the second of the four buildings the church has occupied.

On May 3, 1858, Brierly resigned. However, the effects of the Great Revival of 1857, which had its beginning in a prayer meeting in Fulton Street, New York, were being felt. The Letter to the Association on May 6, 1858, laments the weak spiritual state of the church, and the emphasis on external things to the neglect of the "heart-life." In spite of this the Letter declares, "Never, since the settlement of our state has San Francisco witnessed a season so full of promise as the present. The interest and attendance in the daily prayer meetings shows that the divine redeemer is in our midst." During the fourteen months between pastorates twenty-seven members were added to the church, and in the Spring of 1859 a splendid new organ was installed at a cost of \$2,300.00.

On June 16, 1859, ten years after the church was constituted, the good news came from the eastern committee appointed to select a pastor that the Rev. D. B. Cheney of Philadelphia had accepted the invitation to the pastorate and was already on his way to San Francisco. Even the formal minutes give an indication of the sense of gratitude occasioned by this advice: "Voted. That a committee of gentlemen and ladies be appointed to make all necessary arrangements for a hearty welcome and reception of our new pastor, Rev. D. B. Cheney, on his arrival in this city." On Saturday, July 2, Cheney arrived by steamer and on the following day administered the Lord's Supper to seventy-nine communicants. That evening he preached his first sermon in San Francisco from Roman 1:15: "As much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." This was the beginning of a blessed ministry in the city by the Golden Gate.



SAN FRANCISCO IN 1868

Growth and Expansion



HE coming of Dr. Cheney marked the end of a decade of service on the part of the church, and the beginning of a new era of growth and expansion. The period ending was one of humble beginnings, of constant struggles and bitter disappointments. The difficulties and trials of those years, and the constancy and devotion of the faithful few who remained true amid the stress and indifference characteristic of the pioneer decade, rebuke our complacent acceptance of conditions far more favorable, and our failure to realize the possibilities of these later days. In those years of beginnings the foundations had been well and truly laid. Amid all the hostile influences that prevailed, the men and women who were united in this church fellowship wrought and walked in the footsteps of Him whom they knew as Savior and Lord. With much of weakness and failure, they were steadfast in their discipleship. During this period of ten years two hundred and thirty-eight persons had united with the church, and the membership at the close of the decade was one hundred and thirty-six, about eighty of whom resided in the city.

The church now entered upon an era which witnessed a vigorous evangelistic ministry on the site on Washington Street, which had been consecrated by the devotion and sacrifice of the early years. That site, no longer set apart for the service of God, yet remains in memory a holy place, as one recalls the host of those who there found Christ and who there met God face to face.

The pastorate of David Batchelder Cheney is the outstanding one during these years of growth and expansion. He was a man of large gifts and fervent spirit. One of his outstanding characteristics was his warm affectionate nature, and this contributed greatly to his success.

The most striking thing about the work of the new pastor was his evangelistic zeal. He had a "passion for souls." "I came here," he wrote, "not to seek yours, but you. There was no glitter in this land of gold to attract me from my pleasant eastern home: I came because here was a field lying waste for the want of a gospel laborer. . . . I have felt myself called to 'watch for souls as one who must give account,' and I have labored so to preach that the blood of souls should not be required at my hand."

The pastorate of Cheney proved what has been proved frequently in this church and others, and is now being demonstrated, namely, the effectiveness of an aggressive evangelistic ministry in a metropolitan center. This was seen immediately. A month after his arrival thirteen new members were received, and a month later fifteen. This continued month after month. The Annual Letter to the Association in 1860, a few months after Cheney's arrival, reports 101 additions: seven baptisms, seventy-eight received by letter, and fifteen by experience, and one restored. The following year seventy-six were reported, twenty-one by baptism; in 1862, forty-five, nine by baptism; in 1863, sixty-six, thirty by baptism. And so it goes. During the eight years



Washington Street
Edifice
1857 — 1876

of the pastorate, 473 new members were received, 146 by baptism, a striking record when one considers the size of the church and the conditions of the period.

At the same time that all this activity was going on within the church, other churches were being formed, groups of members being sent forth for this purpose with prayer and love. These new churches grew out of missions conducted by the church in various centers. In December, 1862, the Second Baptist Church was constituted in place of the Fifth Street Mission, to which fifty-seven members were dismissed. Two years later letters were granted to six people, including the Rev. B. S. McLafferty to form a Baptist church at Virginia City, Nevada. The following year the Tabernacle Baptist Church in San Francisco was organized, with thirty-six members from the First Church. In February, 1866, a Branch Church was established in San Pablo, the members retaining their membership in the Mother Church, the



A plaque that still marks the spot of the First Church Building of San Francisco in 1849

official name of the organization being the San Pablo Branch of the First Baptist Church of San Francisco. A year later, in February, 1867, the Rev. George E. Davis and twenty-two other members were dismissed to form the First Baptist Church of San Pablo.

During all of this period "a large share of attention" was given to the Sunday School. The attendance was greatly increased, and the Sunday School Library enlarged to 3,000 volumes. The School was a thriving missionary organization, as illustrated in the engagement in 1860 of the Rev. J. B. Morse as a City Missionary, "through whose labors," it was stated, "we hope to see still larger accessions to the School, more especially from that class of the young who are under no direct religious influence."

The increased spiritual vigor in the life of the church was reflected in

the improved financial situation. This had been a cause of almost constant anxiety since the founding of the church. At the beginning of the pastorate the indebtedness of the building was \$15,000.00, with interest of one and a half per cent per month, and \$2,000.00 on the organ, with interest of two per cent per month, an interest account of \$3,180.00 per year. Within a few months \$5,000.00 was paid off the debt, and in 1862 it was entirely pledged, two years later being entirely liquidated.

The achievements of Dr. Cheney's pastorate are all the more remarkable in the light of the handicaps experienced, and the innumerable calls from beyond his own immediate field. He felt impelled to exercise a much wider ministry than that to his own church; in fact, he came with that end in view. He was concerned with the task of securing ministers for the Coast, and he rendered unique service in this direction. Within a year of his settlement he began the editing and publishing of a Baptist newspaper, "The Evangel," which was of incalculable value to the Baptist cause, but which necessarily consumed considerable of his time. The disrupting influences of the Civil War made the work of the churches more difficult. The church was outspokenly loyal to the government in Washington. A comprehensive resolution dealing with the situation was passed at a meeting on July 8, 1861, and published in "The Evangel," and references to the struggle occur in the records from time to time. Added to all the other difficulties was the constant ill health of the pastor. When he came to the Coast he was in good health, but not long after he developed asthma, which seriously affected his ministry. The situation became so serious that in July, 1867, he resigned, expressing his regret at the necessity for such a step, and his love for the church and his conviction concerning the importance of the field, declaring that there were few Baptist pastorates in the country more important or more difficult.

All through this period there were many loyal leaders in the church, without whom the work could not have succeeded. The names of some appear constantly in the church records. One name which stands out above all others is that of John F. Pope, the first accession to the church in 1849, and a tower of strength through several decades. He served as Deacon, Trustee, and in practically every other capacity, and he left the impress of his fine Christian character upon the church he loved and served. What the Church of Christ owes to such devoted Christian laymen cannot be estimated, and every pastor knows many such for whom constantly he thanks God.

Under Dr. Cheney's leadership the First Baptist Church of San Francisco had become the largest in the state and in many respects the strongest on the Pacific Coast. It is no exaggeration to say that his ministry "profoundly and permanently affected the church, and greatly enlarged its influence in the community."

Dr. Cheney was asked to secure a pastor, and after numerous disappointments he wrote that Dr. Jesse B. Thomas, pastor of the Pierrepont Street Church, Brooklyn, New York, had agreed to accept the pastorate, and an urgent telegram of invitation was sent through Dr. Cheney, stating: "Tell him to come over the mountains and help us." On Sunday morning, February 23, 1868, Dr. Thomas reached San Francisco, and began what



*Dr. Jesse Thomas
1868 — 1870*



Dr. A. R. Medbury
1870 — 1872

promised to be a fruitful and outstanding ministry. He was a man of unique platform gifts, "by nature an orator," and his warm earnest messages made a strong appeal. Large congregations gathered, and many were won to Christ and to the membership of the church. The building soon became too small to hold the crowds, and plans were developed for a new church building. The trustees were authorized to purchase a lot at Bush and Stockton Streets, and it was expected that a building would be erected forthwith. The Annual Letter to the Association in October, 1868, reflects the response of the church to the leadership of the new pastor: "The months intervening since Brother Thomas commenced his labors with us have served to deepen our gratitude to the great Head of the Church for sending to our aid one so well fitted to occupy the position in this important field, and so worthy of the love and confidence of his people. Since Brother Thomas has been with us two mission Sunday Schools have been established in populous but destitute districts of our city."

However, the promise of a long and fruitful pastorate was not fulfilled. At the close of the Sunday morning service on November 29, 1868, a letter from the pastor was read stating that he was reluctantly persuaded that he could not keep his health if he remained in San Francisco, and tendering his resignation. After earnest consideration the church deferred action on the resignation, and granted leave of absence to Dr. Thomas to enable him to return east for medical advice. Late in December he left, the church hoping and praying that it was for but a brief season. However, in February a telegram came stating that there was no hope of his return and the resignation was regretfully accepted.

The Rev. B. S. McLafferty was engaged as supply and the coöperation of Dr. Cheney was again enlisted in the endeavor to secure a pastor. At the end of three months the Rev. John Matthews of Marquette, Michigan, became acting pastor. This was a difficult period in the history of the church. The outlook had been so promising, but now there was a tendency to disintegration, and nineteen months elapsed before another pastor could be secured. The Association Letter in 1870 stated: "We have labored under various adverse circumstances and have been subject to peculiar and severe trials." In spite of the discouragements, however, the church during this period began a Sunday School for Chinese, and the first convert, Dong Gong, was baptized. A number of calls were extended without result. Finally, on the recommendation of Dr. Cheney, a call was given to the Rev. A. R. Medbury, a former member of the church whom the church had ordained, who was then pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Lawrence, Massachusetts. On September 7, 1870, a telegram from Mr. Medbury was read at a church meeting accepting the pastorate.

This pastorate was not a long one, nineteen months, and the church continued to face serious problems. The congregations were satisfactory and the prayer meetings were well attended. Members continued to be added to the church, and the pastor was held in high esteem. But "notwithstanding all the means of grace we have enjoyed," the records state, "yet we have been troubled by a general lukewarmness. . . . During the year we have



O. C. Pope
Son of J. F. Pope
Deacon and Clerk
for many years

been obliged to withdraw the Hand of Church Fellowship from an unusually large number of our membership."

Financial problems were acute, and in February, 1872, a committee appointed to consider the financial policy of the church recommended "as a means of retrenchment" that a prayer meeting in the lecture room be substituted for the usual Sunday evening service and this was adopted. Two weeks later the pastor resigned, giving three months notice, and in due course the resignation was accepted with expressions of affection and "highest respect for his patience, courage, cheerfulness and willing self sacrifice under peculiarly embarrassing and disheartening circumstances of labor."

A few weeks after Mr. Medbury closed his work, Rev. Joseph Freeman of Vermont reached San Francisco on his way to Washington Territory, and arrangements were made with him to serve as pastoral supply. The church responded immediately to his leadership and a new spirit was manifested. He engaged in an extensive program of visitation, and the results were soon apparent in increased attendance and interest. During this period an interesting record occurs in the minutes of the "Experience Committee," (Deacons): "The subject of a 'Young People's Meeting' suggested by Brother Trip and others, was discussed at length. Decided to be inexpedient at present."

In September 1873, the Rev. T. Mulcahy of Little Rock, Arkansas, began to supply the pulpit and a few weeks later he was called to the pastorate. He was a man of earnest and devoted spirit and under his ministry congregations increased greatly. A deep affection developed between pastor and people and the outlook was most encouraging. However, the promise was not realized. Fears had been expressed on the occasion of the call that Mr. Mulcahy's health would not permit him thus to serve. These proved to be well founded, for he served for only a couple of months, passing away a month later. Fortunately Dr. Freeman was available, and again he became pastoral supply. In March an enthusiastic call was extended to the Rev. E. B. Hulbert of St. Paul, Minnesota, and on August first he began his ministry, which was to mark a new stage in the history of the church. The membership at this time numbered 308 members.

The First Migration



R. HULBERT was a good organizer, and he at once began to develop an aggressive program. "He came to us," the church stated, "with bodily health, a vigorous well cultivated intellect, a soul full of love towards God, and for the souls of men. As a master workman in the employ of the great Head of the Church, he leads on to spiritual industry." A "Plan of Church Work" was adopted, organizing the work into three departments, the department of visitation, the department of ingathering, and the Sunday School Department. These in turn were subdivided into ten sections. It was soon apparent that the new pastor



Eddy Street Edifice
1876 — 1899



Dr. E. B. Hulbert
1874 — 1877

expected the church to work. The new program of activities was not without some hindrance, but the church stood by the new leader, expressing confidence and affection in him. It is rather interesting to note that the pastor and his wife did not bring their letters to the church from St. Paul until March the first, 1876, nearly two years after accepting the pastorate.

The chief activity during this pastorate was the securing of a new location, and the building of a new church, and all other phases of the work were necessarily affected. A goodly number of members were received, but the losses balanced them, so that the membership remained about the same. The Sunday School continued vigorous, and the Chinese Sunday School also, but it was acknowledged that the earnestness and devotion needed were frequently lacking in these activities. When the new building was erected, however, the way was opened for an enlarged ministry.

The first definite steps toward a new building were taken on June 3, 1875, when the trustees were authorized to sell the Washington Street property and to lease a lot in an excellent location on Eddy Street between Jones and Leavenworth Streets, with an option to purchase, on which it was proposed to build. The Washington Street property was sold to a Chinese for \$29,500, and later the purchase of the Eddy Street property was consummated. On June 20 the final services were held in the old building, the pastor preaching on the subject, "Our New Departure." In the evening other Baptist churches of the city joined in a great service, the church being crowded. It was a memorable occasion, and the emotion in many hearts is evident in scattered references to this last service "on the old spot, so endeared to us and hallowed by precious memories." For nearly twenty years the church had worshipped there, and one does not need much imagination to sense the blessed memories in many hearts. There the Gospel had been faithfully preached, and many had found Christ; and in the ministry of those years God's people had been built up in their faith. On October 13, the cornerstone of the new church was laid. On January 19, 1876, the first meeting was held in the basement of the new building, and four days later the first public services were conducted there.

The completion of the work was long delayed, chiefly owing to lack of funds, and it was not until July 29, 1877, that the new building was dedicated. Dr. Cheney was present and preached at the morning service on the subject: "The Christian Sanctuary," and Dr. Hulbert preached in the afternoon. It was a happy day for the church. For years they had been carrying on under a serious handicap owing to the change in the surroundings of their location, and for two years they had worshipped and worked in a rented hall and in the basement of the new building. Now they were in a "commodious and convenient church home," excellently located, with an auditorium seating 800, stated to be one of the best arranged and most cheerful in the city.

Congregations increased immediately with the occupancy of the new building, and the outlook was encouraging, but less than four months after the dedication the pastor resigned. He had mentioned the possibility to the Deacons some time earlier, and it had been urged upon him that his going

would be a great injury to the cause of Christ on this coast and would result in great injury to the church. However, he felt led of God to leave the work in other hands and insisted on the acceptance of his resignation. The expressions of appreciation and affection concerning him were widespread. He had won the respect and love of old and young and it was with genuine sorrow that the church parted with him. His ministry closed on a high level. A few years later he was called to a professorship in the Morgan Park Theological Seminary, and later served for fifteen years as Dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago.

At the time of presenting his resignation, Dr. Hulbert stated that for some time he had been quietly looking for a minister who could bring to the church the leadership it needed. He believed he had found such a man in the person of Rev. Granville S. Abbott of Watertown, Massachusetts, who had indicated his willingness to accept a call. Mr. Abbott had had experience in debt raising and apparently this was counted in his favor. Hence at the same meeting that Dr. Hulbert's resignation was accepted, Dr. Abbott was given an informal call to the pastorate, which two weeks later was officially confirmed. As an earnest of the good faith of the church, two months advance salary was forwarded with the letter setting forth the call, and a note was included concerning the climate: "Our California winter climate is mild and agreeable and we believe that it will agree with the health of you and yours." Dr. Abbott wired an acceptance, and later wrote at length indicating an earnest spirit of devotion and dedication to the task he was undertaking, especially the liquidation of the debt on the building. On December 30, 1877, he began his ministry, and the report of the day stated that there were "good congregations and delightful interest." The impression made by the new pastor was a very favorable one, and the people were grateful that there had been so little delay in securing new leadership. Hopes were high that the church, now centrally located, and in an attractive and serviceable building, was on the threshold of a new era of prosperity and service. However, the hopes were not realized, owing to the heavy financial burden, and Dr. Abbott resigned, closing his work on December 29, exactly one year after assuming the pastorate.

The immediate concern of the church was the strengthening of its financial position. It is interesting to note that at the annual meeting a couple of weeks after the close of the pastorate, Deacon J. F. Pope suggested the use of the envelope system of contributions, commending the plan as very successful in churches where it had been tried. It was reported that with 160 pews available, averaging a rental of about \$8.00 each per month, only thirty were rented. Nevertheless the trustees began an earnest effort to meet the situation. Special contributions were solicited to care for the more pressing obligations, notably the taxes and insurance, and the balance due on salary to Dr. Abbott.

On April 20, 1879, Dr. E. H. Gray preached for the first time, later being secured as acting pastor, and in October being called as pastor for one year. At the annual meeting in January 1880 the president of the board of trustees, Mr. B. C. Wright, reported all current expenses for the year



Dr. G. S. Abbott
1877 — 1878



Dr. E. H. Gray
1879 — 1880



Interior of the Eddy Street
Church Building



Eddy Street Chapel
1899 — 1906

from the First Baptist Church of Denver to assume the pastorate. The recommendation was adopted most heartily, and the call dispatched. An acceptance was at once forthcoming, in spite of vigorous efforts on the part of the Denver church to keep him. "The memory of work with you years ago," Dr. Henry wrote, "is not only frequent and precious, but constitutes an inspiration and guarantee for the future. I come to you without reservation or regret as the willing servant of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom." On February 6, 1890, Dr. Henry reached San Francisco, nine years since his previous brief period of service, and three days later began a ministry of five years which was marked by a deeply spiritual note.

The congregations increased greatly and the widespread interest in every phase of the work was apparent. Prayer meetings were largely attended, and all the organizations of the church were strongly supported. A Young Men's prayer meeting was held every Monday evening with a large attendance. Eight months after the beginning of the pastorate the Pacific Avenue School was started, with marked success. A strong evangelistic program was carried on from the beginning. An after-meeting was held every Sunday evening following the service and many conversions resulted. The first year there was a net gain of seventy-four, and at the Annual Roll Call with 594 members reported, 320 responded. In September, 1891, 623 members were reported, and a year later 729. The report of two years of service which was presented at the Annual Roll Call in February, 1892, is a remarkable one: 240 additions, 107 by baptism; \$21,000 raised for all purposes; the church debt reduced \$2,000, leaving a balance of \$9,500; \$1,000 given to benevolent objects outside of the church work; congregation doubled; the largest prayer meeting in the city; the Pacific Avenue Sunday School organized; Ladies' prayer meeting, the Steadfast Club, the Shining Star Mission Band, and the Loyal Legion Temperance Society organized; a paper, the "First Church Light" established, with a guaranteed circulation of 2000 copies per month. It is little wonder that the declaration was made: "God has crowned the years with goodness and our lives with love."

The work proved too exacting for the busy pastor. He was active in affairs in the city as well as carrying on a vigorous program in the church, and he was compelled to rest. In June 1894, the Rev. M. P. Boynton accepted a call to become the pastor's assistant, and it was hoped that this would furnish relief so that the work might go on. However, several months later Dr. Henry resigned to accept the call of the La Salle Street Baptist Church of Chicago, stating his desire to be released at once, in order to take immediate steps to recover somewhat his shattered health before assuming his new pastorate. Action on the resignation was postponed, and a committee appointed to urge the pastor to withdraw it. Protests were widespread, including almost every patriotic, Protestant and Christian organization of San Francisco. But Dr. Henry declared that there was no possibility of lightening his load while he remained in San Francisco, and that it was imperative that he should move. Hence, with considerable reluctance, the required action was taken.

The assistant pastor became acting pastor, and a Pulpit Committee was



Orrin H. Oxendine
Sunday School Secretary
for 20 years

appointed consisting of the deacons, trustees, treasurer and clerk. Meantime the work proceeded in strength, with large attendances at the services and prayer meetings. In October it was reported that the work of the Sunday School was never in a better condition and that the attendance had doubled during the summer. A Sunday School missionary was engaged on half time service, Mrs. N. J. Wood, working in conjunction with the three Sunday Schools conducted by the church, and her work showed gratifying results. In spite of another recommendation from the Pulpit Committee it was voted that Mr. Boynton be called as pastor, the influence of the young people being chiefly responsible for this. The new pastorate began on January 1, 1896, and later in the month a reception was held for the pastor and his wife, with a large number in attendance.

Mr. Boynton possessed unusual organizing ability, and the results were apparent in the work of the church. A month after beginning his pastorate he began the publication of "The Pastor's Monthly Letter," the object of which was "to put into the hands of the membership of the church a complete report for the month just gone and to give a brief account of the work for the month to come." These furnish considerable information about the church, and indicate a vigorous and successful program. The Sunday School was enlarged, eight new classes being organized the first year. A new mission Sunday School was taken over in the North Beach district, making three mission Sunday Schools carried on by the church, namely, Bethesda Mission, 1222 Howard Street, between Eighth and Ninth; Galilee Mission in Pixley Hall, Pope and Pacific Avenue; and Washington Square Mission, at 608 Union Street. A Young Disciples Class for children and young people was conducted by the pastor, teaching Christian doctrine, Baptist church polity, and Baptist history. This was a nine months' course leading to a diploma. Also there were three Christian Endeavor Societies working with the young people. The Women's work was highly organized, with a Ladies Aid Society, two Mission circles, and a W. C. T. U. The annual Letter in October 1896, less than a year after Mr. Boynton began his ministry, declared, "His ministry has been crowned with blessings to all the interests of the church." This same letter reported additions numbering 103 and a total membership of 716. The close of the first year of the pastorate showed additions of 109, with a net gain of 84.

However, the finances of the church were a matter of anxiety. The year 1897 began with a floating debt of \$2,362.27, and apparently this was a large factor in the resignation of the pastor, which was presented on May 12, 1897, taking effect on August 1.

For some months the church continued its work with supply preachers until Dr. E. A. Woods of Philadelphia was secured for three months as pastoral supply, beginning his ministry on December 5. After several weeks the Pulpit Committee brought in a unanimous recommendation that he be called to the pastorate, and the church acted favorably, the pastorate beginning on March 1, 1898. A few months later the church stated concerning him: "Ripe in pastoral experience, and faithful as a preacher of the Gospel of Christ, his work has commended itself to all who have attended his ministry." Two



Dr. Mel. P. Boynton
1896 — 1897



H. K. H. Michell
Organist, 1895 — 1930



Dr. E. A. Wood
1897 — 1902

actions of the church early in this pastorate reflect the condition of affairs. One was a vote of the church to the effect that failure to comply with the Biblical and Covenant obligation to contribute regularly to the financial support of the Church should be treated as a matter of church discipline. The other was a drastic revision of the roll, long overdue. One hundred forty members were placed on a suspended list because nothing was known concerning them, and the hand of fellowship was withdrawn from thirty-five. In October, 1898, the church reported 563 members, 181 fewer than the previous year. However, it was stated that in spite of the numerical loss the church was stronger in reality. During this pastorate over 200 united with the church, the number standing at 512 about the time of Dr. Wood's resignation.

Two outstanding events are noted during these years. One was "The May Anniversaries," forerunner of the Northern Baptist Convention meetings, which met with the church in 1899 to celebrate its Jubilee. These meetings were a source of great inspiration to the whole Baptist cause in the city. The other event was the disastrous fire which followed a few weeks after the national gatherings, when the building was destroyed. The insurance took care of the financial obligations outstanding, and the basement floor of the building was restored as a place of worship, the use of which continued until the earthquake and fire of 1906.

On Sunday morning, November 30, 1902, Dr. Woods resigned from the pastorate, and the church regretfully accepted his resignation. It is a splendid tribute to the leadership of the church that the work continued in a healthy condition. The Annual Letter in 1905 reports: "Pastorless nearly three years, but congregations sustained and progress made in all departments."

Calls were extended to various ministers, but without success. For several months Rev. Thomas Baldwin acted as "stated supply" with great acceptance. The Pacific Baptist in May 1904 stated: "At the First church great good is being done by Dr. Baldwin's preaching. Although without a pastor for over a year, the congregations are growing and the spirit is beautiful." "We are out of debt," the church reported, "and have money in the treasury; harmonious, progressing in spiritual matters, and only await the coming of a pastor to gather in the ripening sheaves."

In December 1905 Dr. George E. Burlingame of Chicago supplied for four Sundays, and was extended a cordial invitation to the pastorate, which he accepted. Then on April 18, 1906, came the disastrous earthquake and fire, the latter sweeping over four square miles of the business district. Six of the Baptist churches of the city were "obliterated," including the First



San Francisco just before the Earthquake and Fire, 1906



Eddy Street Site after the Fire in 1906

church, while "three fourths of the First church people were burned out and most of them lost their business." The church offered to release Dr. Burlingame from his agreement to accept the pastorate, but he declined, and this put new heart into the brethren. He made arrangements with friends in Chicago to provide a tent, and announced that services would be resumed as soon as possible. "I count myself honored of God," he wrote, "in being permitted to serve the First Church at this critical time of its history, and except large blessings from Him upon His stricken and yet faithful people. Pray for us that though perplexed none of us may despair." On July 5, Dr. Burlingame arrived, beginning a pastorate of more than a decade, and the work of erecting a building and establishing the church anew began.

In The Heart Of The City



HE immediate problem of the church under the new pastor was the securing of a church home. Four years elapsed before this was realized, years of hard work, often under discouraging conditions. The first place of meeting was Park Chapel, 943 Stanyan Street. By the time of Dr. Burlingame's arrival arrangements had been made for the use of the Swedenborgian Church building on O'Farrell Street, near Fillmore, which provided excellent accommodations.

Owing to the failure of the insurance company only a sum of \$2900 was received for the loss of the building, so that the church started on its task with little more than the lot on which the church had stood. In addition it is to be kept in mind that a large proportion of the membership had been scattered and that most of the members who remained had lost heavily in the fire. Fortunately friends in other areas came to the rescue. Within a few days of the earthquake, representatives of the various Baptist interests met in Oakland, together with representatives of the American Baptist Home Mission Society, and it was decided to make an appeal to the denomination for funds to rehabilitate the churches. All of the stricken churches agreed to make common cause with one another. To carry out this purpose "The California Baptist Relief Committee" was organized with Dr. Claiborne M. Hill as chairman, and Dr. Charles H. Hobart as secretary. A splendid re-



Dr. George E. Burlingame



Breaking Ground for the Present Edifice at Market and Octavia Streets
August 30, 1909



George H. Moore
Trustee and Builder of
present Edifice



Corner Stone Service, November, 1909

more than two years before a suitable site was secured. On January 23, 1907, the church authorized the sale of the lot on Eddy Street, and on July 20, 1908, a building committee was appointed. A month later a choice location was secured, almost exactly in the center of the city, at a point where Waller and Octavia Streets near Market Street. This is the site of the present building, and has proved an admirable position for the church.

There was still much to be done before the church could move into its new home. A year after the purchase of the site, plans were adopted and the beginning of the work authorized. On August 30, 1909, ground was broken for the building by Mr. George H. Moore, and on November 13 the cornerstone was laid by Mr. E. F. Joy.

A splendid building was erected "of classic design, freely treated," and the week beginning September 14, 1910, was observed as Dedication Week. It was a great time in the history of the church and in the experience



Laying the Corner Stone by E. L. Joy, Dr. Burlingame,
Pastor, and George H. Moore, Builder

of the loyal group who had toiled and prayed for consummation of their hopes and plans. It meant much also to the pastor who had sacrificially led them in the enterprise.



Present Building Under Construction

sponse was given to the appeal, including \$75,000 from Mr. John D. Rockefeller, and the First church of San Francisco received a substantial sum.

For some time the idea of moving to another location had been under consideration, and now the opportunity was taken to this end. However, it was



Dr. Arthur S. Phelps
Intermediate Pastor
1920 - 1922

Meantime the spiritual interests of the church were not neglected. In the four years before the dedication while the church was suffering from the disorganization incident to the fire over three hundred members were added to the roll, and the various phases of the program were sustained in strength. A year of great spiritual blessing is reported in 1907, and an aggressive evangelistic campaign in 1908.

When the new building was dedicated, the church was prepared for a great advance in its position in the city and its service to the community.

Dr. Burlingame continued his ministry for seven years beyond the completion of the new building, and brought the church to a leading position among the evangelical groups of San Francisco. A greatly increased program was now possible, and the people responded loyally. In 1913 it was reported that the attendance ranked



Beautiful Austin Memorial Organ

among the three highest in the city. When the pastorate closed on January 7, 1917, a total of nearly eight hundred new members had been added to the roll, a splendid building with adequate equipment had been secured, and the church was recognized as one of the leading churches of the city.

For a period of five years following Dr. Burlingame, the church was

without a permanent pastor, and was confronted with many difficulties and discouragements. It was fortunate, however, in the men secured as acting pastors during this interim period. Dr. Henry, a former pastor, served as acting pastor for eleven months, followed by Rev. Bryant Wilson



Out-Door Service, conducted by Dr. J. Q. A. Henry,
during the Flu Epidemic in 1919



Donald M. Robertson
formerly Assistant to the
Pastor and for many
years a Deacon, and his
wife, Beth Robertson, the
Pastor's Secretary and
Church Clerk. A member
since 1904



Rev. Joseph W. Davis
Assistant Pastor
1918 - 1922



Dr. James S. West
1922 — 1933



Enid P. Johnson
Our Missionary to China
in 1922 — 1944

Now Thank We All Our God



Dr. David M. Dawson
1933 — 1936

for a year, and Dr. Arthur Stevens Phelps for approximately two years. These men gave strong leadership and rendered incalculable service. Of course there was a certain amount of loss inevitable under such circumstances, and the church suffered a net loss of one hundred. However, in spite of this over three hundred members were added to the church in this five year period.

On November 5, 1922, Rev. James S. West of Detroit, Michigan, became pastor, and the church revived under his leadership. The report of the deacons on May 16, 1932, stated: "How much the coming of a pastor has meant to the board of deacons it is impossible to say, but the results have proved that he was sorely needed. The increase of applicants for membership by baptism, Christian experience and letter was markedly manifest and promising prospects are ahead." Six months later it was reported that the attendances at both services had been multiplied approximately by four; fifty-four had been baptized; 114 had been added by letter and twenty by experience; and that the net gain was 135. The following year the report stated that the previous year's high mark in attendance had been surpassed, with the largest average attendances during the three summer months; and 168 new members had been added. Approximately 700 were received during the first five years, about one third of them by baptism. Finances improved but continued to be a problem. The Rev. George M. Parks had been engaged as assistant pastor, but resigned in February 1924. The following year special leadership in connection with the financial affairs was engaged, but a few years later the statement is made in reference to the indebtedness: "But this great financial problem remains unsolved."

The difficulties increased in various phases of the church's life and work. A number of the members were not satisfied with the conduct of affairs and a large group moved to other churches. In 1932 a motion was passed to place a \$10,000 mortgage on the church to care for the indebtedness. In July 1933 Dr. West resigned, to take effect October 31, completing a pastorate of eleven years, the longest in the history of the church.

THE outlook was a depressing one indeed, when the Rev. D. M. Dawson, the Director of Evangelism of the Northern California Baptist Convention, came to supply for the church in August 1933. He enlisted the financial support of the San Francisco Bay Cities Baptist Union and the Northern California State Convention and agreed to serve the church for six months beginning November 1, 1933. When he first came to the church he found a group of thirty gathered for the Sunday morning service, in an auditorium seating 1200. The members were discouraged, feeling that perhaps it was true, as many were saying, that the church was dead. Many of the officers were inactive. The

financial problem was acute. A few months after he began his work, the membership numbered 370, many of whom were inactive, never located and finally dropped.

As a result of his work, in February 1934 an urgent and unanimous call of the church was extended to him to become pastor, and he resigned his position as Director of Evangelism. The task he faced seemed insuperable. However, immediately a steady growth began. The spiritual life of the church was deepened, and out of that renewal the problems began to be



Educational Building Added In 1940

solved. The feelings of the church are expressed in the Annual Letter to the Association in 1935: "It is with a feeling of deep reverence and gratitude to God for His abundant grace and multiplied blessings that we look upon the year just passed, with rejoicing. Under the leadership of our pastor, we have had some outstanding victories with definite results accomplished for the Kingdom. We have added to our

membership roll 101. Of this number twenty-nine were led through the baptismal waters." The report stated that the Sunday congregations were steadily increasing, and that all departments of the church were thriving. A year later there is reference to the "bountiful blessings of the Heavenly Father," and 107 additions are reported, 49 by baptism. For two and a half years Mr. Dawson gave himself sacrificially to the work, and thereby laid the foundations for a large and strong church. The gratitude of all the members of the church may be expressed in familiar words: "Now thank we all our God."

On Mr. Dawson's



Morning Worship and Communion Service, 1944



Dr. Lewis J. Julianel
1936 — 19—



Mrs. L. J. Julianel



Elijah M. Dill
Assistant Pastor

resignation the Pulpit Committee unanimously recommended that a call be extended to the Rev. Lewis J. Julianel of San Diego, and Mr. Julianel wired an acceptance agreeing to begin his work on November 8, 1936. He is now in the eighth year of his ministry in the city by the Golden Gate. The story of these years is a striking one. The church which had been reckoned "dead" is now one of the great churches of the denomination, and one of the leading churches of San Francisco. It exerts a wide influence in the city and reaches out widely in its interest and support.



Mid-Week Prayer Meeting

Dr. Julianel's ministry is strongly evangelistic, and the slogan of the church is "The Center of Evangelism in the Hub of the City." This evangelistic emphasis runs through the whole program of the church. It is strongly emphasized in the preaching and in the various organizations. In addition, evangelistic campaigns are held twice each year. The results are seen in the growth of the membership. When he first came the church numbered 325 members, while on May 8, 1944, exactly seven and a half years after beginning his work, the membership numbered 1843. In less than eight years with the period ending April 30, 1944, 2,638 new members have been received, 832 by baptism. Also the church is highly organized especially with a view to the enlistment of the members in actual service. Each

person joining the church has a personal conference with the pastor and effort is made to discover what each person is interested in doing and capable of doing in the work of the church. Good faith is shown by subscribing to the financial support of the church and its outreach.

Emphasis is given



Open House in the Gym every night for Service men and Women.



John Notley Nicholls
Music Director and Organist 1933
— 1944. Now serving in the
Armed Forces.

also to the educational program. A strong church school has been built up, numbering more than 550. During the years there has been a steady and continuous growth in the enrollment and attendance. This brought to the front the need for additional accommodation with the result that a new building has been erected for educational purposes at a cost of \$45,000. The church now has provision for eight assembly rooms and forty-eight classrooms, together with a gymnasium and other necessary equipment. A careful system in following up absentees is followed; workers' conferences are held regularly each month; and there are two annual leadership training schools. There are eight different groups of young people meeting each week, and as most of these stay for the church service the church has developed the largest Sunday evening congregation in the city.



A Busy Corner for The Church

Earnest effort has been put forth to increase the missionary interests of the people, and missionary giving has multiplied many times. The whole financial record is a staggering one. In these seven and a half years \$285,500 have been raised for all purposes, \$105,000 for building enlargements, \$36,500 for missions, the original debt of \$12,500 has been liquidated. In addition to the \$45,500 paid for the new building, \$60,000 have been used for other equipment improvements. The property of the church, free of debt, is valued at a

quarter of a million dollars. Of course the hearts of the people are filled with gratitude. God has done great things for them, whereof they are glad.

Ninety-five years beside the Golden Gate! The First Baptist Church of San Francisco had a very humble beginning. A little



The Bethany Bible Class



Roy Thompson
Director of Training
Union



Mrs. Edna Anderson
Bible School Supt.



B. A. Scott
Chairman of the Board of
Trustees

group of six people met in the house of Charles L. Ross and entered into covenant with one another. During these ninety-five years there have been seventeen pastors of the church and a number of acting pastors. The record of the years reveals many lights and shadows, periods of spiritual blessing alternating with periods of spiritual dearth. Difficulties and disappointments innumerable have appeared, and problems have been serious and constant, but through all those years there has been a loyal group who stood by even when things looked darkest, and God blessed them, and others through them so that today the church is the largest in its history and by far the strongest in every phase of its work. One thing stands out in the record in striking fashion, namely, the periods of greatest blessing, when the church has made its greatest progress, have been periods of earnest devotion to Christ and warm evangelistic zeal to win others to Him. All who are interested in the building of the kingdom of Christ rejoice in the blessing which has come to this church and in the strength which it has developed under its present leadership.



San Francisco in 1944

Facts...

of Interest About Our Church

1. Our Church was the First Baptist Church, not only in San Francisco but in California.
2. Our Church erected the first building for public worship in California.
3. Our Church was used as the first free public school building in California.
- 3a. Dwight L. Moody and Ira Sankey held an evangelistic campaign in our church October 1880.
4. Our present Church Auditorium has a seating capacity of 1200.
5. During the years the Church has received a number of memorials and other gifts from members and friends, which have been greatly appreciated.
6. Twenty beautiful Art Glass Memorial windows have recently been installed.
7. There are sixty-six rooms (number of books in the Bible) in our building, 14 closets and one kitchen.
8. Our Educational unit is built for a thoroughly departmentalized Bible School, accommodating 800 pupils.
9. Our Bible School has a corps of 80 officers and teachers. There are 48 classes in our school and the record attendance so far has been 680 with an average attendance in the last four months of 568.
10. Baptist Training Unions consist of eight groups, ranging from the ages of Junior Hi to Adults. The average attendance the last four months is 248.



*Helen Alice Julianel
Church Secretary*



*Mrs. Margaret Sessano
President of Women's
Missionary Society*



Lucile Millar
Organist



Edwin T. Rickman
Minister of Music



Willis Cole
Sexton

11. We also have a gymnasium, lounge room for our service men, also a banquet room sufficient to accommodate 450 at the tables.
12. We have a full time work for our service men and women. Our Church is open every evening, including all day Sunday, for the convenience of our service men and women.
13. Our Church sponsors the following projects:
 - (1) Child Evangelism—14 homes of our Church are open each week, with an average attendance of 370. These classes are taught by members of our church.
 - (2) Released Time Classes: Five Released Time classes from the schools in San Mateo and also several classes at the Bayshore Baptist Church are taught by teachers from our church.
 - (3) A Bible School is conducted each Sunday morning at the Edge-wood Orphanage, with 135 children attending, by teachers and workers from our church.
 - (4) Services are held at the Howard St. and 4th St. Downtown Mis-sions every Tuesday night with an average of 30 from our church participating in this noble work.
 - (5) Worship services are conducted at the Old People's Home of the city, known as the Laguna Honda Home, by workers from our church each Sunday afternoon.
 - (6) Jail services are held at the City Jail, as well as the County Jail, by members of our Church every Sunday afternoon.
 - (7) Program of Highway Evangelism is also conducted by members of our Church.
14. During the last 7½ years, 2638 new members have been added to our Church, 832 by baptism. The last five years we have averaged 131 baptisms per year.
15. In the last nine years our church attendance has increased from 40 to 1000 at the morning worship, and in the evening about 25 to approxi-mately 500.
16. Our church has expended \$105,000 on new buildings, improvements and equipment in the last 7½ years and it is now entirely free of debt.
17. Our Church property, building and equipment are valued at \$250,000.
18. Two hundred and sixty-seven young men and women from our church have enlisted in the Armed Forces.
19. Owing to the constant growth and the great prospect in this most stra-tegic and promising field, our church is anticipating a \$250,000 building program in the next five years.
20. Our Present Membership is 1860.

PROGRAM CELEBRATION OF THE NINETY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY

of the
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH
San Francisco, California

1849 to 1944

July 2-9

Music Director.....Edwin T. Rickman
Organist.....Lucille Millar

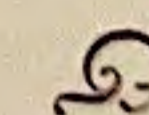
Sunday, July 2

Morning Worship Service.....10:50 a.m.

Felicitations from the Bay Cities Baptist Union
Dr. W. Earle Smith

SERMON: "DO WE HOLD THE PRIMITIVE FAITH?"
Dr. John Bunyan Smith

Evening Praise Service.....7:30 p.m.
SERMON: "THE UNDYING TORCH".
Dr. John Bunyan Smith



Tuesday, July 4

NINETY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION PICNIC
All Day at the Golden Gate Park
(9th Ave. Entrance off Lincoln Way)

COMMITTEES FOR THE DAY:

Location and Transportation.....George P. Purchase
Finance.....B. A. Scott
Publicity.....Beth Robertson
Hospitality.....W. W. Raisner
Devotional.....Marion Stump
Refreshments.....Mrs. L. J. Julianel
Prizes and Games.....Roy Thompson



Dr. John Bunyan Smith
First Baptist Church of
San Diego, California



Dr. J. Whitcomb Brougher
First Baptist Church of
Glendale, California



Dr. Ralph Walker
First Baptist Church of
Portland, Oregon

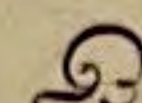
Wednesday, July 5, 7:30 p. m.

ALL CHURCH GATHERING

Felicitations from churches of the Northern California Baptist Convention
Dr. Reuben Olsen

Mortgage Burning Ceremony.....*Dr. Lewis J. Julianel*

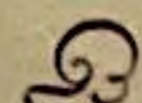
ADDRESS: "THE CHURCH THAT BUILT A BANK"
Dr. Ralph Walker



Thursday, July 6, 7:30 p. m.

Felicitations from churches of San Francisco
Rev. Hughbert H. Landram

SPECIAL ADDRESS: "PLAY BALL"
Dr. J. Whitcomb Brougner

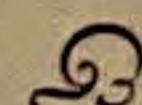


Friday, July 7, 7:30 p. m.

I REMEMBER WHEN:
By Mrs. Beth Robertson

OUR BIBLE SCHOOL in the Future.....	<i>Mrs. Edna Anderson</i>
OUR OFFICIALS in the Future.....	<i>Fred Olmsted</i>
OUR TRAINING UNION in the Future.....	<i>Roy Thompson</i>
OUR WOMEN'S WORK in the Future.....	<i>Mrs. J. Sessano</i>

SPECIAL ADDRESS: "YESTERDAY A DREAM; TODAY A VISION; TOMORROW A REALITY"
Dr. David M. Dawson



Sunday, July 9

Morning Worship Service — 10:50 a.m.

SERMON: "NINETY-FIVE YEARS BESIDE THE GOLDEN GATE, AND A LOOK AHEAD"
Dr. Sanford Fleming

Evening Praise Service — 7:30 p.m.

SERMON: "BEHIND THE GREAT UNKNOWN"
Dr. Lewis J. Julianel



Dr. Sanford Fleming
Author and President of
Berkeley Baptist Divinity
School.

"TO SERVE OUR GOD AND THE PRESENT AGE"

Our Post-War Enlargement Program calls for a \$250,000 building project. Our Ninety-fifth Anniversary Celebration affords the opportunity to launch this forward movement. Five years from now we will celebrate our Centennial. Our goal is to have our new building complete and in use at the celebration of the hundredth year of a most glorious and eventful history.

No nobler goal could be adopted by a church than this. And, what an age in which to be alive and be privileged to serve our God. An age which demands our very best. To serve it best requires clear vision, sound judgment, and a willingness to invest time, talent and possession in Christian enterprises. To meet its greatest needs we must present the message of our Christ with conviction and power.

In a singular way God has blessed and honored the message and program of "The Old First Church." Hers has been a unique growth. Scores have come and are coming to her doors for the way of salvation, Christian fellowship, and service. Shall we say to those who come—"We can no longer care for you, go elsewhere." Or shall we build larger so as to meet the demands which are ours? The answer is, we will build for we must! We must SERVE our God and This Present Age.